

News Release

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RPU officials refute water report finding

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Riverside Public Utilities (RPU) officials announced today that a recent Internet blog report placing Riverside's drinking water among the worst in the nation is just plain wrong.

"Bottom line: Riverside's water is safe to drink and meets or surpasses state and federal water quality requirements," said Kevin Milligan, RPU assistant general manager/ water.

The Environmental Working Group, a watchdog nonprofit based in Washington, D.C., released the report on Saturday. It placed Riverside as No. 2 on a list of cities with the worst water in the nation.

However, Milligan said, what the report does not indicate is that samples used in the survey were from groundwater sources taken before treatment as required by California Department of Public Health and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

RPU General Manager David Wright said the people of Riverside can see annual water testing statistics going back to 2001 at the RPU Web site:

<http://www.riversideca.gov/utilities/water-wqr.asp>.

"We conduct hundreds of tests on our water system, and it has always been there for everyone to look at," he said. "EWG reports like this inspire fear where there is no danger. It's misleading. Riverside's water has never had a water quality violation. Never. It appears this EWG organization, which has never actually been here, can't tell the difference between ground water and tap water."

The report, using information from more than 91,000 tests provided by RPU, indicated that traces of 35 chemicals were found in the source wells over the last five years. Riverside's groundwater is principally from wells located in San Bernardino.

According to the LA Times, a spokesman for the Eastern Municipal Water District also said much of the water quality data from his agency was for untreated supplies. The county was No. 4 on the list from the EWG.

"We don't feel there's anything in our water supply that we deliver to people that could cause any harm," Peter Odencrans of EMWD said.

There have been no reports made of health complaints from drinking the water.

"If anything, this is a sad comment about the nature of groundwater in a heavily industrialized area," Milligan said. "That's why we spend millions of dollars with treatment plants and filtration systems. But, when it comes out of your tap, that water is clean."

When asked by a constituent Sunday if his water was safe to drink, Ward 1 City Councilmember Mike Gardner assured him that it was.

"It's a little like saying a grocery store sells dirty carrots because they have dirt on them when they are harvested," Gardner replied.

The EWG report openly urges the federal government to "establish new safety standards, set priorities for pollution prevention projects, and tell consumers about the full range of pollutants in their water."

"The people of Riverside should know that Riverside Public Utilities does not dump untreated water into their faucets," Milligan said. "I drink it every day. My children drink it and we have no plans to change."

According to a recent customer service survey by a national research firm, Riverside Public Utilities maintains extremely high customer satisfaction levels in both the water and energy needs of the community.

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Established in 1895, Riverside Public Utilities is a consumer-owned water and electric utility governed by a board of nine community volunteers that provides high quality, reliable services to over 107,000 metered electric customers and 63,400 metered water customers throughout the City of Riverside. The Utility is committed to increased use of renewable energy resources and sustainable living practices that help reduce environmental impacts within the City of Riverside and the state of California.

www.RiversidePublicUtilities.com

www.GreenRiverside.com

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